

What is claimed is:

1. An environment information server, comprising: ✓
  - a server controller;
  - 5 a network connection connected to said server controller;
  - an environment information database connected to said server controller for storing data for one or more network environments; and
  - a request handler connected to said server controller for processing requests received through said network connection;
  - 10 wherein said request handler exchanges data with said environment information database in the course of processing a received request.
2. The environment information server of claim 1, wherein:
  - the data for an environment stored in said environment information database
  - 15 includes network information for the environment, status information for the environment, and user count information for the environment.
3. The environment information server of claim 1, wherein:
  - said network information indicates a name of the environment.
  - 20
4. The environment information server of claim 1, wherein:
  - said network information indicates a fully qualified domain name of the environment.
- 25 5. The environment information server of claim 1, wherein:
  - said network information indicates a port number of the environment.
6. The environment information server of claim 1, wherein:
  - said status information indicates whether the environment is available or not.
  - 30
7. The environment information server of claim 1, wherein:
  - said user count information indicates the current number of clients connected to the environment.

8. The environment information server of claim 1, wherein:

said user count information indicates the maximum number of clients allowed to be connected to the environment.

5 9. The environment information server of claim 1, wherein:

said environment information also includes description information indicating information describing the environment.

10 10. The environment information server of claim 9, wherein:

said description information indicates news about the environment.

11. The environment information server of claim 1, wherein:

said environment report provides multi-lingual support.

15 12. The environment information server of claim 1, wherein:

said environment information request indicates client information about said client.

13. The environment information server of claim 1, wherein:

20 each environment supports an on-line game.

14. The environment information server of claim 1, wherein:

said requests are received from game consoles connected to said network connection through the Internet.

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15. The environment information server of claim 1, wherein:

said network connection is connected to the Internet.

16. The environment information server of claim 1, wherein:

30 said request handler generates environment reports using data stored in said environment information database.

17. The environment information server of claim 16, wherein:

said request handler customizes environment reports using client information in received requests.

5 18. A method of providing environment information, comprising: ✓

receiving an environment information request from a client through a network connection;

retrieving environment information for each of two or more environments from an environment database;

10 generating an environment report according to said retrieved environment information; and

sending said environment report to said client through said network connection;

15 wherein environment information for an environment includes network information for the environment, status information for the environment, and user count information for the environment.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein:

20 said network information indicates a name of the environment.

20. The method of claim 18, wherein:

said network information indicates a fully qualified domain name of the environment.

25 21. The method of claim 18, wherein:

said network information indicates a port number of the environment.

22. The method of claim 18, wherein:

30 said status information indicates whether the environment is available or not.

23. The method of claim 18, wherein:

said user count information indicates the current number of clients connected to the environment.

24. The method of claim 18, wherein:

said user count information indicates the maximum number of clients allowed to be connected to the environment.

5 25. The method of claim 18, wherein:

said environment information also includes description information indicating information describing the environment.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein:

10 said description information indicates news about the environment.

27. The method of claim 18, wherein:

said environment report provides multi-lingual support.

15 28. The method of claim 18, wherein:

said environment information request indicates client information about said client.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein:

20 said environment report is customized according to said client information.

30. The method of claim 18, wherein:

said network connection is connected to the Internet.

25 31. The method of claim 18, wherein:

said client is a game console.

32. A method of accessing environment information, comprising:

30 sending an environment information request from a client to an environment information server through a network connection; and

receiving from said environment information server an environment report including environment information for two or more environments;

wherein environment information for an environment includes network information for the environment, status information for the environment, and user count information for the environment.

- 5     33. The method of claim 32, further comprising:  
         connecting said client to a data network;  
         establishing said network connection between said client and said environment  
information through said data network;  
         closing said network connection to said environment information server after  
10   receiving said environment report.
34. The method of claim 32, further comprising:  
         presenting said environment report through said client.
- 15   35. The method of claim 32, further comprising:  
         selecting an environment according to said environment report.
36. The method of claim 35, further comprising:  
         establishing a second network connection to said selected environment.  
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37. The method of claim 36, further comprising:  
         accessing an online game using said selected environment.
38. The method of claim 32, further comprising:  
25        said environment information request indicates client information about said  
client.
39. The method of claim 38, further comprising:  
         said environment report is customized according to said client information.  
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40. The method of claim 32, further comprising:  
         said network information indicates a name of the environment.

41. The method of claim 32, further comprising:

said network information indicates a fully qualified domain name of the environment.

5 42. The method of claim 32, further comprising:

said network information indicates a port number of the environment.

43. The method of claim 32, further comprising:

said status information indicates whether the environment is available or not.

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44. The method of claim 32, further comprising:

said user count information indicates the current number of clients connected to the environment.

15 45. The method of claim 32, further comprising:

said user count information indicates the maximum number of clients allowed to be connected to the environment.

46. The method of claim 32, further comprising:

20 said environment information also includes description information indicating information describing the environment.

47. The method of claim 46, further comprising:

said description information indicates news about the environment.

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48. The method of claim 32, further comprising:

said environment report provides multi-lingual support.

49. The method of claim 32, further comprising:

30 said network connection is to the Internet.

50. The method of claim 32, further comprising:

said client is a game console.

51. A computer program, stored on a tangible storage medium, for use in providing environment information, the program comprising executable instructions that cause a computer to:

process an environment information request from a client through a network connection;

retrieve environment information for each of two or more environments from an environment database;

generate an environment report according to said retrieved environment information; and

send said environment report to said client through said network connection; wherein environment information for an environment includes network information for the environment, status information for the environment, and user count information for the environment.

52. A computer program, stored on a tangible storage medium, for use in accessing environment information, the program comprising executable instructions that cause a computer to:

send an environment information request from a client to an environment information server through a network connection; and

process an environment report from said environment information server including environment information for two or more environments;

wherein environment information for an environment includes network information for the environment, status information for the environment, and user count information for the environment.